

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action dated December 30, 2005. Applicant has amended claims 1-3, 8, 12, 13, 17-19, 23, 24, 28, 29, 33, 34, 38, 39 and 43, and cancelled claims 10, 11, 14, 26, 27, 30, 32, 41 and 42. Claims 1-9, 12, 13, 15-25, 28, 29, 31, 33-40 and 43-50 are pending.

Objections to the Specification

In the Office Action, the Examiner identified informalities within the Specification. Applicant has amended paragraphs [0007], [0021], [0043]¹ and [0051] as suggested by the Examiner to correct the identified informalities. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the specification be withdrawn.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 8, 9, 11, 14, 23-25, 27, 30, 34, 38-40, 42-44, and 49 as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has amended previously-presented independent claims 1, 17 and 33 to include the limitations of allowable claims 11, 27 and 42, respectively, as well as the limitations of intervening claims 10, 26 and 41. Applicant has also amended allowable claims 8, 23, 24, 34, 38, 39 and 43 to place them in independent form, and claims 13 and 29 to place them into independent form and to include the limitations of allowable claims 14 and 30, respectively.

In sum, as amended, the Application includes twelve independent claims numbered 1, 8, 13, 17, 23, 24, 29, 33, 34, 38, 39 and 43, each of which recites subject matter that the Examiner has indicated is allowable. Consequently, all claims in the Application are in condition for allowance.

¹ The Examiner identified informalities that occurred within paragraph [0043], but mistakenly referred to paragraph [0042].

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has cancelled claim 32 without prejudice in the interest of expediting allowance of the Application, rendering this rejection moot. Applicant respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-4 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,659,968 B1 to McClure (McClure), and claims 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17-22, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37, 41, and 45 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U. McClure in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,609,032 B1 to Woods et al. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections. The applied references fail to disclose or suggest the invention defined by Applicant's claims, and provide no teaching that would have suggested the desirability of modification to arrive at the claimed invention.

However, as discussed in greater detail above, Applicant has amended the Application to include twelve independent claims numbered 1, 8, 13, 17, 23, 24, 29, 33, 34, 38, 39 and 43, each of which recites subject matter that the Examiner has indicated is allowable. Consequently, these rejections are rendered moot, and all claims in the Application are in condition for allowance. Applicant has amended the claims in order to expedite allowance of this Application, and reserves the right to pursue the cancelled claims and the non-cancelled claims as presented prior to this Amendment in one or more continuation applications.

Application Number 10/696,778
Amendment dated May 1, 2006
Responsive to Office Action mailed December 30, 2005

CONCLUSION

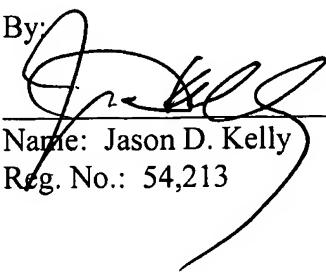
All claims in this application are in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims. Please charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to deposit account number 50-1778. The Examiner is invited to telephone the below-signed attorney to discuss this application.

Date:

5/1/06

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